

Please amend the Application as follows.

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

The present listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Claims 1 - 13. (Cancelled).

Claim 14. (Currently Amended): A silicon nitride material comprising:

- (a) sintering aids including at least  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ;
- (b) silicon dioxide;  
the sintering aids and silicon dioxide being present in a grain boundary phase; and
- (c) an additive that is retained as a disperse phase, said additive being selected from the group consisting of SiC, TiCN and combinations thereof, and optionally being further selected from the group consisting of TiN, TiCN,  $\text{HfO}_2$  and combinations thereof;[[,]] and
- (d) a reactive additive selected from the group consisting of  $\text{TiO}_2$ ,  $\text{WO}_3$  and  $\text{MoO}_3$ ,

wherein the silicon dioxide in the grain boundary phase and the sintering aids including at least  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  in the grain boundary phase have a molar ratio of (silicon dioxide) to (silicon dioxide and sintering aids including at least  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ) that is  $> 65\%$ , and the silicon nitride material has a silicon oxide nitride content that is  $< 1\%$  by weight.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the material further comprises a sintering aid selected from the group consisting of  $\text{Y}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{Sc}_2\text{O}_3$ , rare earth metal oxides, and alkaline earth metal oxides.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is  $< 20\%$  by volume.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 0.1 to 17% by volume.

Claim 18. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 3 to 15% by volume.

Claims 19 - 22. (Cancelled).

Claim 23. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the material has a porosity that is  $< 2\%$ , by volume.